

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

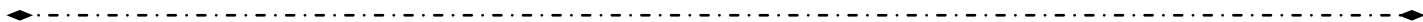
Meeting Date: November 17, 2016

Agenda Item: Fleecer Wildlife Management Area Addition (R3)

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Endorsement

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 Min



Background

The Department proposes to purchase a approximately 200-acre parcel of private land adjacent to the Fleecer WMA.

The Fleecer WMA Addition property offers many qualities that are important to the WMA and associated habitats:

- Shares two miles of boundary with Fleecer WMA and provides additional winter range to more than 800 elk and 150 antelope.
- Has more than 100 acres of wetlands with two miles of Divide Creek running through it. Long-billed curlew and sandhill cranes have been documented nesting on the property.
- All water and mineral rights would transfer with the property.
- The property has about 100 acres of uplands that are prime for development if it remained in private ownership.
- The addition would increase public access for hunting (white-tailed deer in the riparian, plus elk and antelope), angling, bird-watching, and photography.
- The parcel includes about 70 acres of irrigated hayfields that would be managed to the benefit of wildlife. Game damage complaints on these hayfields have been a consistent problem in the past. With FWP ownership, this problem goes away, and with continued management of the hayfields for production, it could help alleviate elk game damage concerns on other private lands nearby.

Approximately 100 acres of wetland on the property, associated with Divide Creek, is encumbered by a perpetual conservation easement with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (Wetland Reserve Program). The encumbered portion would be compatible managed as part of the WMA.

Public Involvement Process & Results

Upon endorsement by the Commission, an environmental analysis will be conducted that will include a minimum 30-day public comment period.

Alternatives and Analysis

The available alternatives are to purchase or forgo purchase of the property.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP recommends proceeding further with this proposal. The parcel, situated between a county road and Fleecer WMA and comprising high priority wildlife and fisheries habitats, is a natural extension of the existing WMA.

Proposed Motion

I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission endorse this addition to Fleecer WMA, allowing FWP to proceed with further negotiations, evaluation, due diligence, and public review.